

Young Artist Awards Winner Biographies 2007

Natalia Merezhuk - violin
First Prize, Instrumental

Born in Russia, Natalia has been studying violin since she was four years old, studying with Galina Stepanova Turchaninova before moving to the U.S., where she studied at the Peabody Conservatory's pre-college division with the late Lery Slutsky. She is presently studying with Emil Israel Chudnovsky. She has performed in the U.S. and Russia, including such prestigious venues as the Dom Kultury in Moscow and the Russian Embassy in Washington. She is repeatedly among the youngest violinists in Montgomery County's Youth Orchestra and performs extensively in the Washington metropolitan region.

Ying Tang – violin
Second Prize, Instrumental

Ying comes to Bethesda, Maryland from Hangzhou, China via Atlanta, Georgia. He has been studying privately since 2002, mostly with Kate Rao of North Potomac. He has performed with his school orchestras at Shamrock Middle School in Atlanta, as well as Tilden Middle School and Walter Johnson High School here in Maryland. He has recently won positions on the Potomac Valley Youth Orchestra, Maryland Classic Youth Orchestra, and All-County Junior Honors String Orchestra.

Andrew Yu – cello
Third Prize, Instrumental

Andrew has studied the cello since he was eight, first with Mathew Tifford, and more recently with Evelyn Elsing. He has been principal cellist with the Maryland Classical Youth Orchestra and has been selected to play in the Maryland All-State Junior Orchestra in 2005 and 2006. He has won numerous awards in both solo and ensemble competitions, including First Place in the Strings Ensemble Plus Competition in 2006. When he is not with his cello, he can be found playing tennis or reading comics.

Karen Kong
First Prize, Piano

Karen began her study of the piano at age five with Mei-Yu Lin and is currently studying with Thomas Pandolfi. She has served as student accompanist for choruses at Rachel Carson Elementary, Ridgeview Middle, and Quince Orchard High schools. She has won many honors and awards, including First Prizes at the Solo Saul Roas Broad Creek Music Festival and the Saul Roas Scholarship Competition. In addition to her Classical repertoire, she has served as pianist with the Ridgeview Middle School Jazz Band.

Arlene Gao
Second Prize, Piano

Arlene has been playing piano for seven years and is now studying with Dr. Chen-Li Tzeng. She has won a number of awards, including First Place at the Montgomery County Concerto Competition and the Maryland State Music Teachers' Association Spring Festival Solo Competition. In her free time, she loves to read and rollerblade.

Joshua Sommerville - tenor
First Prize, Vocal
Third Prize, Piano

Joshua is a lifelong resident of the City of Gaithersburg, and has been a "child of song" since he was a toddler. Early on he showed a fascination with gospel singing as well as all sorts of instrumental performers, particularly pianists. He began studying piano with Jennifer Holt at his own request as a rising 2nd grader, and has been studying various aspects of music with many teachers ever since. As a result of his unceasing desire to explore and maximize his musical talents, he has been asked to appear as guest soloist, accompanist, or director with various musical groups at venues up and down the East Coast, including the Poplar Grove Baptist Church where he directs the Gospel Choir.

Shaina Martinez - soprano, guitar
Second Prize, Vocal
Honorable Mention, Instrumental

Shaina has been exploring her interest in music since she started playing the piano at age six. She has studied piano with Eric Himy, voice with Joan McFarland, and guitar with Dr. Orlando Roman. She has augmented her vocal training with participation in the Washington National Opera's Summer Opera Camp Program for the past two years, and uses her talents in various ways at her church. She has been selected to perform on the Academy of Music's 2006 Honors Recital, among other honors.

Erica Weiner - soprano
Third Prize, Vocal

Erica is a fourteen-year-old freshman at Seneca Valley High School where she is a member of the Treble Choir. She has been studying voice with Kay Krekow, and has already been a member of the chorus in a performance of Puccini's *Tosca* with Harry Dunston's American Center for Puccini Studies.

Mitchell Osherovich – boy soprano

Honorable Mention, Vocal

Mitchell has been studying piano with Melanie Monk for five years, as well as studying voice with Joy Stevans for two years. He is also studying flute at school, in addition to singing in the Westover ES Chorus and the Children's Chorus of Washington. He has sung in the Montgomery County Elementary Honors Chorus, and performed professionally at venues such as the Round House Theater and the Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage. His interest in musical theater has led to his playing Kurt in *The Sound of Music* and the Prince in *The King and I*, among other productions.

Stephen Watson - violin

Honorable Mention, Instrumental

Stephen has been playing the violin for six years, and is now studying with Yakov Shapiro. He has enjoyed playing with several orchestras in the area, including the Maryland Classic Youth Orchestra Philharmonic and Montgomery College Symphony Orchestra. He has won First Prize for his division in the MSMTA Strings Plus Competition, along with his siblings, for the past two years. He spends his spare time studying jazz improvisation, writing fiction, and hanging out with friends.

Kevin Lewi – cello

Honorable Mention, Instrumental

Kevin has been studying cello since 1997, most recently with Duck Hee O'Donnell. He has performed with the Montgomery Blair High School Orchestra as well as the Maryland Classic Youth Orchestra and various All-State and All-County orchestras. He has placed in Ensemble and Solo categories of the Maryland State Music Teachers Association String Spring Festival competitions since 2001.

Emily Weiner – flute

Honorable Mention, Instrumental

Emily has been playing flute for nine years and is currently studying with Nancy Mulholland. She enjoys playing in the symphonic and marching bands at Seneca Valley High School where she is a sophomore. In 1998, she won First Place in the Elementary Division of the Flute Society of Washington. This is her third Honorable Mention in this competition.

Aimee Moores – violin

Honorable Mention, Instrumental

Aimee has been playing violin for nine years, mostly under the instruction of Lisa Pickett. She has played in the Potomac Valley and Maryland Classic Youth Orchestras as well as her high school orchestra at Quince Orchard. She is currently participating in the MCYO Philharmonic group.